

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
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The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple – to provide housing professionals with the advice, support and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world. Further information is available at: www.cih.org

In Wales, we aim to provide a professional and impartial voice for housing across all sectors to emphasise the particular context of housing in Wales and to work with organisations to identify housing solutions.

Introduction

CIH welcomes the opportunity to present evidence to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee for stage 1 scrutiny of the Renting Homes (Wales) Bill.

CIH is the professional body for people working in housing and communities, with over 22,000 members across the UK, Ireland, Canada and Asia Pacific. Our mission is to maximise the contribution that our members make to the well being of communities.

We have provided written submissions to previous consultations on issues relating to the Bill and this paper draws heavily from these. In relation to the Bill itself, our response is informed by feedback from our members, our knowledge of the sector and expertise from our policy and practice teams.

General Comments

CIH Cymru supports the development of Welsh policies, practices and legislation that aim to addressing the key housing challenges we face. We promote a *one housing system* approach that:

- places the delivery of affordable housing at the top of national, regional and local strategies and secures investment to ensure good and sustainable quality of all homes.
- promotes the concept of housing led regeneration to capture the added value that housing brings in terms of economic, social and environmental outcomes.
- recognises the central role of Welsh Government as the housing ‘system steward’ to deliver an integrated housing system that encompasses all sectors and tenure options.

- recognises that meeting the housing needs of our communities is a key aspect of tackling inequality and poverty.
- ensures that there are properly resourced support services in place to prevent homelessness and protect the most vulnerable and supports the key role of local authorities as strategic housing enablers.
- utilises the existing housing stock including initiatives to bring the wasted resource of empty homes back into use.
- uses current and potential financial powers to intervene in housing markets and provide more homes and supports the development of innovative funding models.
- supports the development of new models of ownership and control including co-operative housing.
- recognises the critical role that housing professionals play in delivering good quality housing-related services, including fair access, safe communities and sustainable tenancies.

General Principles of the bill

1. CIH Cymru broadly welcomes the content and the aim of the Renting Homes (Wales) bill. We support the intention to complete tenancy reform and provide a consistent, clear rental framework in Wales, as we supported the previous Law Commission proposals and have been advocating a single tenancy for social housing since 1997.
2. We believe that a new statutory framework bringing together the multiple laws and legislative requirements on occupancy arrangements in Wales will benefit all stakeholders; tenants, landlords and statutory organisations responsible for regulation and enforcement, and will support Welsh Government's one-system approach to the national industry.
3. We endorse the Bill's aims to work in the interests of both tenants and landlords by reflecting the changing legal environment, simplifying and levelling social housing tenancies in Wales, and providing a model contract for private sector landlords and tenants, to standardise rights and encourage transparency as far as possible across the industry.
4. We believe that the proposals for changes to social housing tenancy arrangements will strengthen tenant security, increase equity and protect consumer rights. This includes the principle of 'levelling up' with regards to the bringing together of the two current types of social housing tenancies and their inherent properties (including the intention to remove Ground 8) to ensure that social housing tenants will have a right to judicial review when at risk of losing their home.
5. We commend the inclusion of supported housing in the Bill, and support the proposals to strengthen the housing access rights of young people by allowing 16 and 17 year olds to rent. This will be of particular benefit to young people leaving care and for those young people for whom remaining in the parental home is not a safe option.

6. We also welcome the introduction of prohibited conduct terms, which will help to protect the occupancy rights of victims and hold the perpetrator to account by increasing legal remedies available to landlords that help to deliver a victim-centred approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse.
7. We applaud the intention to make positive change in the Private Rented Sector (PRS), a growing and increasingly important market in Wales through: the introduction of standard contracts; the inclusion of repairing obligations in contracts; protection from retaliatory eviction; and changes to shared tenancies that should give greater flexibility to occupants and consumer rights.
8. We especially commend the collaborative approach taken by Welsh Government and the Bill team to involve all stakeholders in the process of developing the content of the Bill. This has included CIH Cymru, tenant representatives, landlord representatives and other experts who have been consulted on and involved in, the process. We are grateful for this further opportunity to influence and participate in the scrutiny of the Bill.

Potential barriers to the implementation of these provisions and unintended consequences

9. We suggest that appropriate resources should be made available to support the necessary public awareness raising campaign to implement the new legislation, for the benefit of all tenants, landlords and other stakeholders.
10. We understand that there has been some concern regarding the proposed removal of the current moratorium on PRS landlords seeking possession during the first six months of a tenancy. This will have an impact on tenant security and an impact on local authorities who wish to discharge their statutory duty for homeless households into the PRS. CIH Cymru believes that in order to manage anxiety regarding this proposal, there needs to be a commitment to developing tenant and landlord relationships as well as a commitment to develop a national tenant voice for those living in the PRS in Wales.